

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, November 30, 2006

Governor Barbour Touts Results of Meth Laws

JACKSON, Mississippi – Governor Haley Barbour was flanked by sheriffs, police officers, highway patrolmen and state narcotics agents in March 2005 when he signed into law a methamphetamine precursor initiative he said he hoped would make illegal manufacturing of the drug easier to investigate and prosecute.

Today, according to statistics from the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, that law -- coupled with more law enforcement resources -- has significantly reduced the availability of methamphetamine precursors as well as seizures of methamphetamine and the labs that manufacture it.

“The precursor law has been an invaluable tool in fighting the scourge of illegal methamphetamine use,” Governor Barbour said. “When I signed the bill in 2005 I thanked the Legislature for passing it; today, I congratulate Mississippi’s outstanding law enforcement professionals and prosecutors at the city, county and state levels who have worked diligently to stem the tide of what once was an epidemic of abuse.”

Methamphetamine seizures in fiscal year 2006 totaled 36 pounds, down about 30 percent from the 52 pounds seized in FY 2005, the MBN reported. And in FY 2006, the MBN encountered 117 methamphetamine labs, down more than half from the 273 labs the agency encountered in FY 2005.

Governor Barbour in his 2005 State of the State address had called on the Legislature to make the precursors used to manufacture meth harder to obtain. Under the methamphetamine precursor bill that passed that year and took effect in July 2005, non-prescription cold medicine containing pseudoephedrine or ephedrine must be displayed behind the counter or under lock and key. The law also requires customers to show identification and sign their names to purchase the medicine.

Law enforcement officials say pseudoephedrine is the key ingredient in the methamphetamine produced illegally in makeshift labs in Mississippi and around the country.

“Methamphetamine labs pose a danger to officers and citizens alike. They cause fires, explosions and environmental contamination,” said Commissioner George Phillips, who heads the Department of Public Safety.

“In the year since its inception, the precursor law has significantly reduced the availability of methamphetamine precursors as well as seizures of methamphetamine and the labs that manufacture it,” said MBN Director Marshall Fisher.

Governor Barbour said the meth law was among his proposals to create safer communities by giving law enforcement more resources to fight drug crime while putting criminals behind bars. Among those efforts, the Department of Public Safety was reorganized and more state Troopers have been trained and are at work on the state's highways.

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